



## Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs

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Tony Evers, Governor | Mary M. Kolar, Secretary

September 25, 2020

To the Members and Families of Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls:

For nearly six months, you and your family have been a non-stop source of support for one another, our employees, and our other veteran members. Navigating this pandemic hasn't been easy but you've been so supportive—doing everything possible to help limit the spread of COVID-19 in our community. I am grateful for you. Our entire team is proud to serve you with the best in care and services.

Despite strict prevention efforts, we are sorry to report one employee has been diagnosed with COVID-19. In addition, one member and two staff are suspected to be positive for COVID-19 based on testing guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Our thoughts are with these individuals as we pray for full recovery. We are currently testing all members as well as all staff working. All members and employees are asymptomatic at this time.

By following our comprehensive COVID-19 Preparation and Response Action Plan and Infection Prevention Control Program, we're taking every action possible to protect our members and staff while continuing to follow guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, and state, and local health officials.

This program includes:

- Quarantining COVID-19 positive members with dedicated staff to provide care;
- Implementing enhanced infection control and prevention precautions;
- Taking extra environmental safety precautions, such as cleaning and disinfecting high-touch surfaces;
- Screening and monitoring members, staff, and essential visitors for expanded list of COVID-19 symptoms;
- Using and training on personal protective equipment;
- Restricting visitation to the building;
- COVID-19 testing of members and staff based on current protocols and test availability; and
- Cancelling communal activities.

In addition, Gazebo Gatherings are canceled until we receive guidance that we can reopen for in-person visits again.

See the attached member flyer to review our COVID-19 Preparation and Response Action Plan and Infection Prevention Control Program in its entirety.

*Members:* You are a key partner in keeping yourself and others healthy. Please wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, and cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue. COVID-19 symptoms include a fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. Your caregivers are here to secure your comfort and safety. Please let them know right away if you feel unwell.

I encourage you to please contact us if you have any questions or concerns: the main number to the facility is 715-720-6775 or you can email us at our general email of [Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov](mailto:Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov). Thank you for everything you're doing to protect everyone who lives and works at Wisconsin Veterans Home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan Corcoran', with a stylized, cursive script.

Megan Corcoran  
Executive Director  
Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls

## Wisconsin Veterans Home at Chippewa Falls COVID-19 Preparation and Response Action Plan and Infection Control Program

First and foremost, our priority is to keep everyone safe and healthy. We are in close contact with our medical director, other providers, and state and local health officials to ensure we are taking all appropriate steps at this time. We have followed guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), and state and local health officials to protect our members and staff from this virus, and are taking every action possible to prevent it from spreading in our care community.

We thought it would be helpful to provide some additional details of our COVID-19 Preparation and Response Action Plan. The following is a summary of our preventive actions:

- Quarantining members and implementing enhanced infection control measures. This includes establishing a designated area in the building for the member with a positive COVID-19 diagnosis. We will have designated staff to support and care for them and continue to follow all infection control protocols as outlined by the CDC, CMS, and state and local health officials. The dedicated staff would only work in the Covid positive area and would use a specific entrance to limit their exposure in the building. The member will remain in quarantine until well and cleared by medical professionals to return to normal activity.
- Advising affected staff to take all appropriate measures. For their health and well-being, any staff member with a COVID-19 diagnosis is asked to quarantine at home, contact their medical provider to guide their care, and notify their supervisor. We are following all CDC guidance on the return to work criteria for health care professionals with confirmed COVID-19.
- Assessing and screening of individuals who come in contact with anyone affected. The community will work with state and local health officials to assess and screen all who may have come in close contact with the affected individual, and we will be following all requirements in implementing next steps which may include self-monitoring as determined by health officials. We understand there may be an increased desire to be tested for COVID-19. We are following all direction from state and local health officials on the additional testing required for other members and staff.
- Continuing to monitor and screen members for symptoms. We have increased our screening of members for fever and respiratory symptoms. *Members* we appreciate your partnership in keeping yourself and others healthy. Please wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, and cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue. Remember to let us know immediately if you feel ill. COVID-19 symptoms include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea.

For additional information, please visit the CDC's website: [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html) or the Wisconsin Department of Health Services website: [www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm](http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/index.htm).

- Continuing to screen staff prior to beginning work. Staff are not allowed in the building if they are ill. Upon arriving at the building, a detailed health screening is completed including taking their temperature to check for a fever. Any staff who exhibit symptoms are instructed to keep on their mask, isolate at home, call their medical provider, and notify their supervisor. Additionally, our staff is following CDC guidelines for hand and other related hygiene requirements.
- Continuing to implement environmental safety precautions. Housekeeping staff continue to take extra measures to clean and disinfect all high-touch areas throughout the building. This includes countertops and tables, faucet handles, toilet flush handles, door knobs, door handles, crash bars, bathroom and kitchen areas, elevator call buttons, and hand rails.
- Continuing to restrict visitors in our building for everyone's safety. Visitors who need to enter the building for end-of-life care situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis to assure safety for all. We encourage loved ones to communicate with members by phone, letters, video chat, and/or social media. We understand that it is hard to not have visitors, especially family. If you have questions, or need assistance with these communication methods, please contact the care community at (715) 720-6775. We are here to support you.

Visitors who are permitted to enter the building for end-of-life situations are first screened for fever and respiratory symptoms. They are also required to frequently clean their hands, limit their visit to a designated area within the building, and wear a face mask and appropriate PPE.

- Continuing to restrict congregate dining and have canceled any internal or external group activities. We have cancelled congregate dining, all community outings, and any group activities. This occurred following social distancing guidance from the CDC, CMS, and state and local health officials. We also continue to help members to practice social distancing and to frequently clean their hands.
- Utilizing personal protective equipment (PPE) when interacting with members and others, as directed by CMS guidelines.

We will continue to be in close communications with our medical director, other providers, as well as state and local health officials, and are monitoring new information from the CDC and CMS to ensure we are taking the appropriate next steps.

We want to take this opportunity to share our ongoing gratitude to our dedicated staff, for their commitment to the care of and service to our members. Their courage is nothing short of inspiring!

It is moments like these that we remember our true calling and what brought us to senior health care. We care deeply about our members and staff and consider them to be members of our own extended families.

Thank you for support and understanding; we are all in this together. Please do not hesitate to contact Katie Plendl, Director of Admissions, at 715-720-6775 or [Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov](mailto:Veterans.Home-CF@dva.wi.gov) with any questions or concerns you may have.